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An Old Story

When Daniel Ellsberg "leaked" the Pentagon Papers to the New York Times the subsequent controversy involved unprecedented actions by the government to suppress the news media. Never before had the government gone into court to try to censor a newspaper.

Those of us who applauded Daniel Ellsberg's courage harbored some misgivings about his leaking classified documents. Was he a spy? Was he a criminal? Were the Pentagon Papers "stolen classified goods" as Herb Klein testified? Only the Supreme Court could judge. In the case of the Times it was ruled it could publish. The government dropped its case against Ellsberg as a result of Watergate.

Now comes a book which answers all our questions: "The Politics of Lying," by David Wise. This book should be mandatory reading for all high school students. In a well-documented analysis of the history of government deception from U-2 to Watergate, Wise removes all our doubts concerning the Times and Ellsberg.

We find that no less a personage than LBJ leaked the same information contained in the Pentagon Papers in his book, "Vantage Point." We learn Kennedy, Eisenhower and Nixon gave top secret information to reporters. We come to understand that "leaking" classified documents is a game played by a host of government officials to shape opinion and create events. We conclude that the public has been deceived.

But wait, has the government ceased to exercise its power against press and public? It seems not. The CIA is lobbying for legislation which would remove democratic legal procedures that protect individuals and move "in the direction of crown privilege" which is the basis for the British Official Secrets Act. That should take care of annoying laws, courts, juries and public opinion.

One wonders if those in the C.I.A. who seek such change realize Americans fought a war 200 years ago to remove "crown privilege." Long live free press! Long live the courage shown by such as Daniel Ellsberg and the research of David Wise.

St. Paul KEN WHARTON, JR.

Wharton, Ken

Ellsberg, Daniel

CIA2.05.2

P-Wise, David

Soc4.01.2 The Politics of Lying